Tales from the
EPIC TALES RESTORED
10¢
No. 1
Feb.
This is a FAMOUS FUNNIES Publication
THE STORY OF SAMSON

Tales From the Great Book

From Slave To Prince!

Daniel, the young Israelite taken by the Babylonians in the fall of Jerusalem is first a slave . . . and later the ruler of the very country that captured him.

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JOHN LENT

THE STORY OF SAMSON

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

BACK in Biblical times an old man named Jacob lived in the land of Canaan. Jacob had many children but his favorite was his youngest son, Joseph, because he was the child of his old age.

Jacob was so fond of his young son that he gave him a beautiful coat of many colors. Joseph was a dutiful boy and when his older brothers didn't attend properly to their duties he told his father about their carelessness.

Now when the older brothers saw that Joseph was their father's favorite and that he had a more beautiful coat than theirs, they envied him and wouldn't even speak when he approached.

To make matters worse, Joseph began to have dreams which he told eagerly to his brothers. He told them that he dreamed they were binding wheat in the fields and that his sheaf arose from the ground and stood upright and that their sheaves also arose and bowed before his. Then he told them about another dream he had in which the sun and the moon and eleven stars worshiped him.

"Does this mean that you will reign over us and that we will be your subjects?" his brothers asked.

"Yes," said Joseph.

Joseph's words turned his brothers' envy into intense hatred. One day while the brothers were feeding their sheep in green pastures far from home Joseph's father sent him to see if all was well with the flocks. When Joseph was still a long distance off his brothers saw him coming.

"Look, it's Joseph," said one brother. "See his coat of many colors?"

"Yes, it is indeed he," said another brother. "He has come to spy on us and carry tales back to our father."

"He is a long way from home," said another. "Now is our chance to get rid of him for good!"

So the brothers conspired against Joseph and some insisted that they slay him. They would have killed him then and there except that one borther, Reuben, had another idea.

"No," Reuben argued, "don't kill him outright. We don't want our brother's blood on our hands. Instead, let us throw him into that pit yonder and go away and leave him to die."

As soon as Joseph arrived his brothers grabbed him and stripped him of his beautiful coat of many colors. In spite of his tears and cries of protest, they threw him into an old well that had gone dry.

While Joseph sat crying, abandoned in the pit, his brothers sat about under the palm trees to have their lunch. When they were almost finished eating they saw a wandering band of Ishmaelites on their way from Gilead to Egypt, riding on camels laden with spices, balm and myrrh.

"Here's our chance," one of the brothers, Judah, said. "Here's a good way to get rid of Joseph without shedding his blood. We will sell him to these Ishmaelites as a slave and they will take him far away into Egypt."

So the brothers lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. Poor Joseph! His despairing cries of protest fell on deaf ears and he was dragged off, a slave, into Egypt.

To make it appear that Joseph met with accidental death, the brothers killed a young goat and dipped the boy's coat of many colors in the blood. Then they brought the bloodstained coat home to their father and showed it to him.

"We found this coat in the wilderness," they lied. "It looks very much like Joseph's."

The father recognized his son's coat immediately. "It is indeed Joseph's," he cried. "My poor boy —an evil beast must have devoured him!"

Old Jacob was broken-hearted and he mourned deeply for many, many days. All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him but he refused to be consoled.

"I'll mourn for my son all the rest of my life," he wept—"till the day I'm lowered into the grave!"

Months passed. The Ishmaelites carried Joseph across deserts and hills into Egypyt and sold him to one of the king's officers by the name of Potiphor, captain of the guard. Joseph served his master well. He was a good and holy child and Potiphor found he could trust him. Eventually, when he was older, Potiphor made him overseer of his entire household.

Under Joseph's able administration Potiphor's affairs prospered. His business ventures were successful and his fields yielded abundant harvests and he became a wealthy man.

But Potiphor's wife and the other servants conspired against Joseph and lied to the master of the house. In anger Potiphor threw Joseph into prison.

But the Lord, knowing that Joseph was a sincere and holy lad, saw to it that he was looked upon with favor by the keeper of the prison. The prison keeper, knowing that Joseph was a boy who could be trusted, put him in charge of all the other prisoners.

Shortly afterward, the king—or Pharaoh, as he was called—became angry at his chief butler and chief baker. Fuming with rage, he threw them into the prison where Joseph was held. While in prison Joseph became friendly with the two unfortunate servants and amazed them by his accurate interpretation of the dreams that interrupted their slumber. Some time later, the chief butler was forgiven by the Pharoah and restored to his old job.

CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER!

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Tales from the Great Book

Young DANIEL'S FAITH

by John Lehti

IT IS THE YEAR 604 B.C. AND YOUNG DANIEL CAN FEEL THE TENSENESS THAT GRIPS ALL JERUSALEM....FOR NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S BABYLONIAN ARMY HAS BESIEGED THE CITY....LIKE THE ELDERS, EVEN THE CHILDREN TRY TO HIDE THEIR FEAR.... SO, DANIEL CALMLY PLAYS A FAVORITE RING GAME WITH HIS FRIENDS....

...HANANIAH, MISHAEL AND AZARIAH. DANIEL IS STRONG AND FAST... AND WINS EASILY BY CATCHING THE MOST RINGS.

AZARIAH--THE YOUNGEST--HAS TROUBLE KEEPING HIS MIND ON THE GAME....

....WHEN MUCH MORE INTERESTING THINGS ARE GOING ON AT JERUSALEM'S GATE!

DANIEL COAXES AZARIAH BACK TO THE GAME.

DANIEL IS NOT SO ANXIOUS TO PLAY, HIMSELF....BUT HE FEELS HE MUST KEEP HIS FRIENDS' MINDS OFF WHAT IS HAPPENING OUTSIDE JERUSALEM'S WALLS....

— FOR TOO MANY OF THE TOWNSFOLK WATCHING FROM THE WALLS ARE ALREADY FILLED WITH THE TERROR OF....

....THE ARMY OF MIGHTY KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR OF BABYLON, COMPLETELY SURROUNDING THE CITY....

...PREPARED TO DESTROY JERUSALEM!

WHILE NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SOLDIERS, STANDING GUARD AT ALL THE APPROACHES TO JERUSALEM, FEAST ON THE FRUITS OF ISRAELITE LABOR....

...EVERY EXTRA STRIP OF GROUND IN THE CITY IS PLANTED IN A HOPE-LESS EFFORT TO FEED THE PEOPLE!

FACED WITH THIS GRIM FATE, THE BOYS DO NOT FEEL MUCH LIKE PLAYING. DANIEL KNOWS THE COMING BATTLE IS A PUNISHMENT ON JERUSALEM FOR NOT OBEYING GOD'S LAW..

....THE PROPHET JEREMIAH WARNED JERUSALEM MANY TIMES....

THE PEOPLE IGNORED JEREMIAH'S WARNING OF THIS DANGER.... NOW IT'S ALL COMING TRUE!

AZARIAH VOICES THE THOUGHT IN THE MINDS OF ALL THE BOYS... "WILL...WILL WE BE SLAVES?" "IF WE ARE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE LEFT ALIVE AFTER THE ATTACK," MISHAEL ANSWERS GRIMLY!

SUDDENLY--A HOARSE CRY COMES FROM A GUARD ON THE WALL...!

ALONG WITH THEIR ELDERS, THE YOUTHS RUSH UP THE STEEP WORN STEPS TO SEE WHAT HAS CAUSED SUCH ALARM!

THE YOUNG LADS TREMBLE AT THE FEARFUL SIGHT BELOW....

"WE WILL ALL BE KILLED!" CRIES AZARIAH. "NOT UNLESS GOD WILLS IT," DANIEL REPLIES--COMFORTING YOUNG AZARIAH.

BUT DANIEL HAS TO COVER THE FEAR IN HIS OWN VOICE AS HE SEES NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S BATTERING RAMS MOVE TO THE WALLS...

... AND HEARS THE CRYING OF WOMEN ALL AROUND HIM!

AS THE RUMBLE OF THE WAR MACHINES GROWS LOUDER AND THE ELEPHANTS COME CLOSER, THE TERRIFIED CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM SCATTER FROM THE WALLS...

BUT DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS STAND FIRM... BESIDE A GRIZZLED OLD SOLDIER WHO MUTTERS, "THIS IS A JOB FOR THE KING'S ARCHERS!"

"WHERE ARE THE ARCHERS?" SOMEONE SHOUTS. "YES, CALL THE ARCHERS-- LET THEM EARN THEIR KEEP!" .OTHERS CRY OUT.

BUT THE GRIM-FACED ARCHERS ARE ALREADY ARRIVING!

DUE TO HASTY AIM AND NERVOUSNESS, NEARLY ALL THE ARROWS FALL SHORT...

...BUT THE SECOND VOLLEY IS MORE ACCURATE, AND....

...THE ELEPHANTS STAMPEDE, TRYING TO ESCAPE THE BITING STING OF THE ARROWS... TRAMPLING THE HERDERS...

SOME SEEK SHELTER IN THE BATTERING RAMS...

JERUSALEM'S ARCHERS LAUGH IN GLEE AT THE CONFUSION BELOW AND SEND VOLLEY AFTER VOLLEY OF ARROWS DOWNWARD!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAS BEEN WATCHING THE ACTION FROM A HILL IN ANGER... NOW HE ORDERS HIS ARCHERS TO BEGIN THEIR ATTACK!

THE BABYLONIAN ARROWS ARE AS THICK AS FLIES...NOTHING HUMAN CAN LIVE UNDER SUCH A DOWNPOUR... SO DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS RETREAT FROM THE WALL.

"WHAT CAN WE DO?" AZARIAH CRIES. "NOTHING--EXCEPT PRAY AND TRUST GOD," DANIEL ANSWERS. "WE MUST NOT LOSE FAITH!"

...BUT WITH THE DEFENDERS DRIVEN FROM THE WALL, THE BATTERING RAMS CAN BE PUT TO WORK AGAIN AND SOON... THE GATES ARE SMASHED OPEN!

ACCORDING TO CUSTOM, THE VICTORIOUS BABYLONIANS LOOT THE CITY AND SEARCH FOR LIKELY-LOOKING SLAVES....

"IT IS JUST AS JEREMIAH PROPHESIED," DANIEL SAYS FEARFULLY.

NOW NEBUCHADNEZZAR RIDES TRIUMPHANTLY INTO THE CITY HE HAS CRUSHED....

"I WONDER WHAT IS IN STORE FOR US?" HANANIAH ASKS. "WE SHALL KNOW SOON ENOUGH," MISHAEL ANSWERS, "AND PROBABLY REGRET IT."

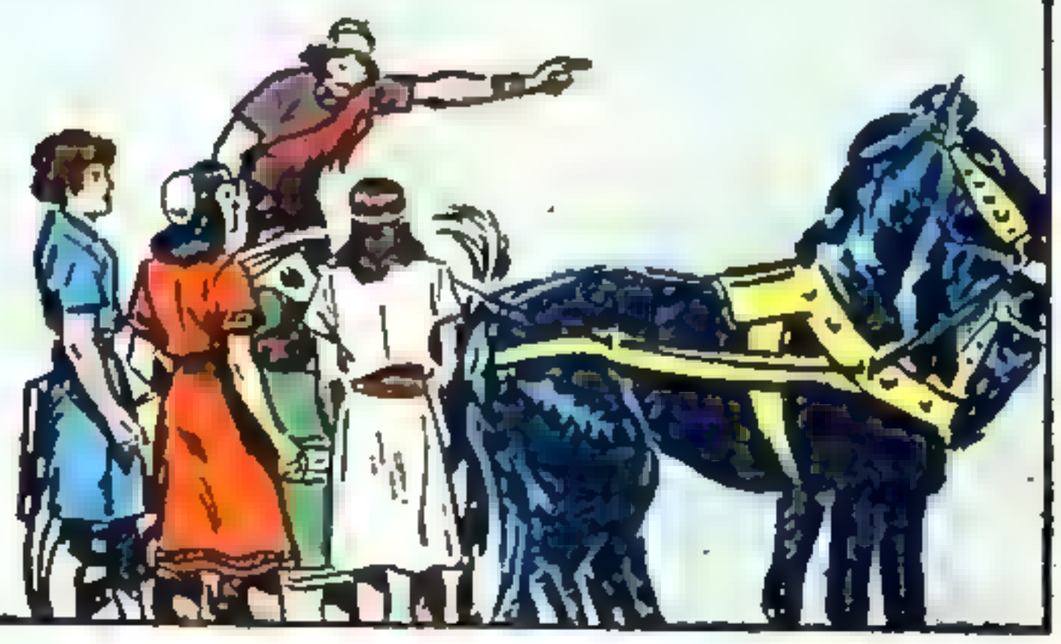
TO DANIEL, THIS KING DOES NOT APPEAR AS CRUEL AS THE STORIES TOLD ABOUT HIM.

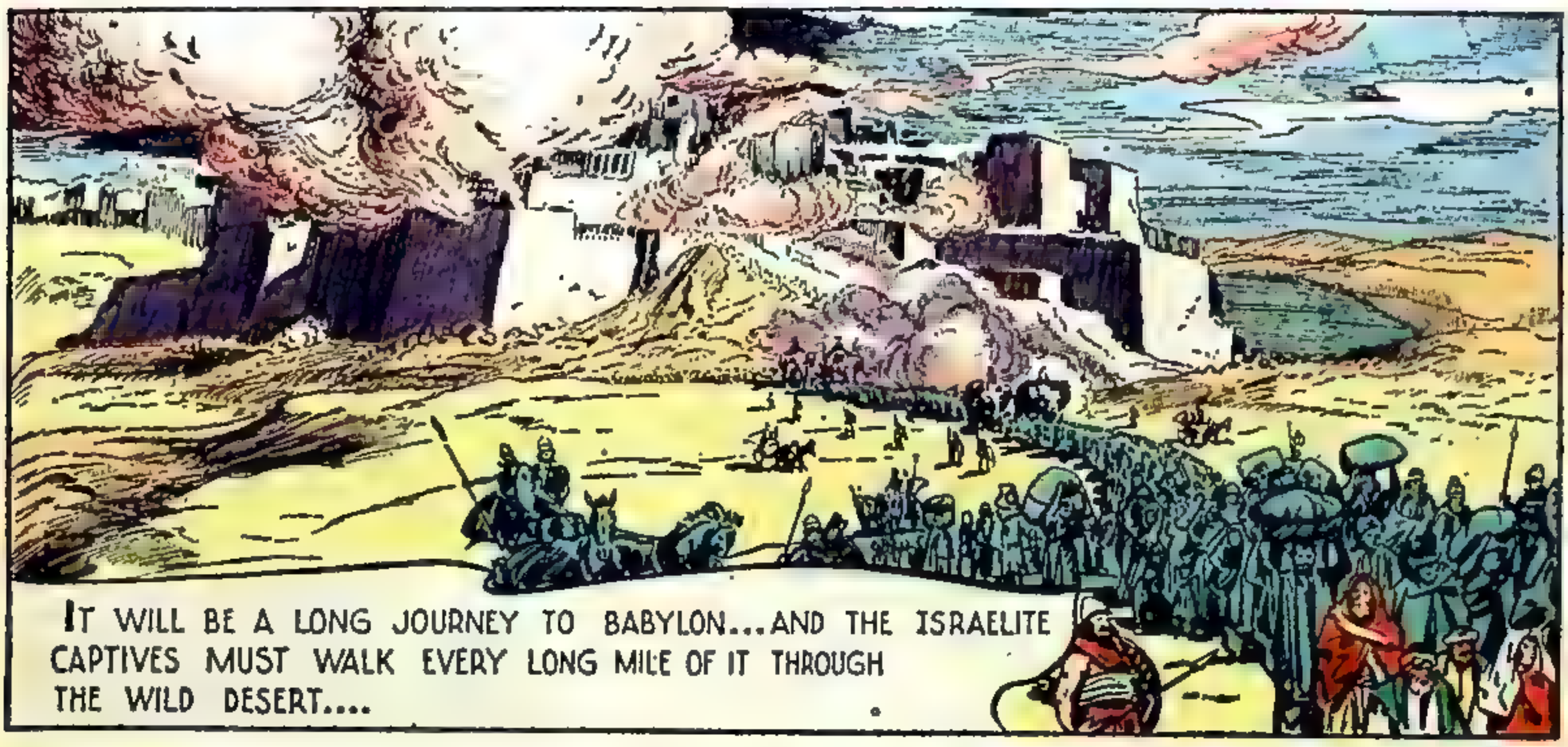
AT THIS MOMENT--
AN OFFICER OF THE KING STOPS.... AND LOOKS...

"WHY DO YOU HIDE FROM ME?" THE OFFICER ASKS AZARIAH. "HE IS YOUNG-- AND FRIGHTENED," DANIEL EXPLAINS.

NOW THE FOUR YOUTHS ARE ORDERED TO FOLLOW THE OFFICER....

"YOU SHALL BE TAKEN TO BABYLON," THE OFFICER STATES... DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS ARE TO BE TORN FROM THEIR LOVED HOME... BROUGHT TO THE STRANGE LAND OF THEIR ENEMIES--AND A FATE THEY CAN ONLY GUESS AT!





IT WILL BE A LONG JOURNEY TO BABYLON...AND THE ISRAELITE CAPTIVES MUST WALK EVERY LONG MILE OF IT THROUGH THE WILD DESERT....

BUT DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS BRAVELY ENDURE THE HARDSHIPS....

...HELPING THE WEAKER BY SHARING THEIR OWN MEAGER SUPPLY OF FOOD AND WATER.

THE LADS' GENEROSITY DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED...PRINCE ASHPENAZ SEES.

THOSE BOYS ARE THE KIND THAT KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR ORDERED ME TO LOOK FOR...I MUST REMEMBER THEM.

° FINALLY, AFTER MONTHS OF WEARY TRAVEL, THE MAGNIFICENT CITY OF BABYLON COMES INTO VIEW.... SHIMMERING LIKE A SPARKLING JEWEL ON THE HORIZON..... EVEN A FUTURE OF SLAVERY WILL BE A RELIEF AFTER TOILING THROUGH THE WILD DESERT!

YOU WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE KING. IF HE LIKES YOU, YOU WILL BE GIVEN THREE YEARS OF SCHOOLING.

LATER, AS THE ISRAELITES REST BESIDE THE EUPHRATES RIVER, IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT CITY WALL, PRINCE ASHPENAZ SPEAKS TO THE FOUR LADS...

IF THE KING ACCEPTS YOU, YOU SHALL LIVE IN THE ROYAL PALACE LIKE PRINCES.

PRINCES!

"WHEN YOU ARE BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING, YOU MUST BOW SO...." ASHPENAZ INSTRUCTS THEM. "BUT WE CAN NOT BOW TO ANYONE EXCEPT OUR GOD," SAYS DANIEL.

"YOU ARE IN BABYLON NOW," PRINCE ASHPENAZ REPLIES STERNLY, "HERE THE LAW STATES EVERYONE MUST BOW TO THE KING – OR DIE! TAKE MY ADVICE, LAD...FORGET YOUR LAW!"

ON THEIR WAY TO THE ROYAL PALACE, THE OTHER YOUTHS TRY TO PERSUADE DANIEL THAT IT MIGHT BE ALL RIGHT TO BOW TO THE KING...

."SURELY GOD WILL UNDERSTAND," SAYS HANANIAH..."ISN'T IT BETTER THAN BEING KILLED FOR DISOBEDIENCE," MISHAEL ADDS.. ..."AND NOT BEING HERE TO SERVE HIM?"

"I AM NOT SURE....I AM NOT SURE," DANIEL REPLIES. BUT AS HE BEHOLDS THE WONDROUS SIGHTS OF THIS MARVELOUS CITY, HE IS TORN BY TWO DESIRES—TO LIVE IN ALL THIS SPLENDOR....BUT STILL TO PLEASE GOD.

"IF ONLY I DIDN'T HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE," DANIEL THINKS.

NOW THE YOUTHS FOLLOW ASHPENAZ UP THE STEPS OF THE FAMED "HANGING GARDENS" OF BABYLON...THE ARTIFICIAL MOUNTAIN OF TERRACES NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAS BUILT FOR HIS QUEEN TO HELP DISPEL HOMESICKNESS FOR HER OWN NATIVE HILLS... GARDENS SO MAGNIFICENT THAT THEY WILL BE FOREVER REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD....

IN A FLASH, THE EVIL FACE VANISHES.... STARTLED, DANIEL STARES AT THE WINDOW BUT IT REMAINS EMPTY!

AS THEY MOUNT FROM TERRACE TO TERRACE, DANIEL FEELS AN URGE TO LOOK UP, IN PASSING, AT A WINDOW...

THE OTHERS HAVE ALREADY DISAPPEARED INTO A DARK ARCHWAY -- NOW AS DANIEL HURRIES TO CATCH UP, HE SEEMS TO PICTURE THE UGLY FOREBODING FACE AHEAD OF HIM.... GLARING IN THE DARKNESS....

HIS THOUGHTS ARE BROKEN BY TWO PAGES, LEAPING INTO THE ROOM LIKE GAZELLES..."BOW DOWN! BOW DOWN! THE KING COMES!"

...AND KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR ENTERS - FOLLOWED BY THE EVIL-FACED MAN DANIEL SAW IN THE WINDOW!

"BOW DOWN TO THE KING OF BABYLON! LORD OF THE UNIVERSE!" THE HIGH PRIEST SCREAMS!

IT IS UT-HAMASH, HIGH PRIEST OF THE PAGAN GOD MERODOCH..."DID YOU NOT HEAR THE COMMAND?" HE SHOUTS! BUT DANIEL HAS MADE HIS DECISION!

"FOR THIS DISOBEDIENCE, I, MYSELF, SHALL THROW YOU INTO THE FIERY MOUTH OF BAAL!"

TELL ME, LAD, WHY DO YOU NOT BOW DOWN TO ME?

WHEN I PRAY TO GOD, I BOW DOWN... AND I CANNOT HONOR ANY MAN - EVEN A KING - AS I HONOR MY GOD.

"BUT NEBUCHADNEZZAR INTERRUPTS THE HIGH PRIEST'S RANTING." "ONE MOMENT, UT-HAMASH. I SHALL SPEAK TO THIS YOUTH MYSELF."

"BUT THESE-YOUR FRIENDS-ALSO WORSHIP THE SAME GOD," NEBUCHADNEZZAR SAYS..." THEY HONOR ME BY BOWING.... WHY IS THIS?"

"THEY HAVE BEEN WARNED IT MEANS DEATH TO REFUSE," DANIEL ANSWERS... "AND IT IS ONLY THEIR FRIGHTENED BODIES THAT HONOR YOU - NOT THEIR HEARTS. BUT I WISHED YOU TO KNOW THE TRUTH IN MY HEART, SO I STOOD!"

AFTER A THOUGHTFUL PAUSE NEBUCHADNEZZAR TURNS TO HIS AIDES... "MARK WELL THIS YOUTH WHO SPEAKS HIS MIND, UNAFRAID."

"...WHEN HIS THREE YEARS OF STUDY ARE FINISHED, HE WILL BE THE GREATEST SCHOLAR...AND BRING HONOR TO MY NAME — AND TO ALL BABYLON!"

"I SHALL MARK HIM WELL, INDEED," UT-HAMASH MUTTERS TO HIMSELF. "FOR HE IS A DANGEROUS THREAT TO MY PRIESTHOOD!"

AND THE EVIL PRIEST LEAVES, DARK SCHEMES FORMING IN HIS SERPENT-LIKE MIND!

NOW DANIEL, HANANIAH, AZARIAH AND MISHAEL ARE ASSIGNED ROOMS OF THEIR OWN IN THE PALACE — ROOMS FIT FOR A PRINCE!

AND SUMPTUOUS FOOD IS BROUGHT TO THEM...FOOD FIT FOR A KING--FOR IT IS FROM THE KING'S OWN LARDER!

LIKE MOST BOYS-WHO ARE ALWAYS HUNGRY-THE YOUTHS RUSH TO THE TABLES OF STEAMING RICH FOODS.

"BUT WE CANNOT EAT THIS FOOD," DANIEL SAYS. "FOR IT IS NOT PREPARED UNDER OUR LAWS." "BUT THIS IS A ROYAL ORDER," SAYS MELZAR, THE STEWARD..."IF YOU DO NOT EAT...I WILL LOSE MY HEAD!"

BUT DANIEL PLEADS TO BE ALLOWED TO EAT A VEGETABLE DIET FOR JUST TEN DAYS..."YOU WILL SEE...WE WILL BE JUST AS HEALTHY AS IF WE HAD EATEN THE KING'S RICH FOOD!"

MELZAR AGREES TO DANIEL'S REQUEST--ALTHOUGH HE IS RISKING HIS OWN LIFE, ALONG WITH THEIRS, BY DISOBEYING THE KING'S ORDERS.

AT THE END OF THE TEN DAYS, MELZAR IS AMAZED. "BY BAAL'S GREAT BEARD! WH..WHY, YOU LOOK EVEN HEALTHIER THAN THE OTHERS!"

• SO, WHILE THE OTHER BOYS EAT SAVORY MEAT AND DRINK SPARKLING, SPICED WINES—DANIEL, MISHAEL, HANANIAH AND AZARIAH EAT ONLY PEAS AND WATER.

I AM CONVINCED... FROM NOW ON, EAT ONLY WHAT YOU WANT - I SHALL TELL NO ONE!

NOW THE LADS MUST APPLY THEMSELVES TO THE SPECIAL SCHOOLING NEBUCHADNEZZAR HAS ORDERED. THROUGHOUT THE THREE YEARS, DANIEL LEADS THE CLASS IN EVERY FIELD OF LEARNING - MUCH TO THE ANGER OF ONE PUPIL, NISROCH - AMBITIOUS NEPHEW OF THE EVIL HIGH PRIEST, UT-HAMASH.

LATER, NISROCH ASKS HIS UNCLE: "HOW CAN THESE ISRAELITES LEARN SO MUCH FASTER THAN I... AND WHY DO THEY LOOK SO HEALTHY... IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE IN THE SCHOOLROOM THAT DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS DO NOT EAT THE KING'S FOOD."

Fictional parts are added in this story to show prevalent customs of ancient Babylon. The true Biblical account, on which the story is based, may be read in BOOK OF DANIEL, Chap 1.

SO! THEY DISOBEY THE KING'S ROYAL ORDER, DO THEY?

"COME! NOW I KNOW HOW TO PLAN A METHOD BY WHICH DANIEL SHALL DESTROY HIMSELF... WITH THE HELP OF THE GREAT GOD MERODOCH I SHALL NOT FAIL!

IN A SECRET ROOM DEEP INSIDE THE PAGAN TEMPLE OF BEL-MERODOCH, UT-HAMASH PERFORMS CERTAIN MYSTERIOUS RITES AS HE PREPARES AN EVIL BREW...

NOW ALL IS READY. UT-HAMASH AND NISROCH HURRY TO THE PALACE WING....

TOMORROW IS THE DAY WHEN THE KING WILL EXAMINE THE SCHOLARS.... SO TONIGHT'S WORK WILL BE WELL REWARDED!

IT IS KIND OF THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST TO BLESS THE FOOD OF THE YOUNG STUDENTS.

TOMORROW, OUR NOBLE KING WILL TEST THEIR KNOWLEDGE...THIS WILL HELP THEIR MINDS TO BE BRIGHT.

HIDING IN AN ALCOVE, THEY WAIT UNTIL MELZAR AND HIS RETINUE APPEAR WITH THE FOOD FOR DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS....

LATER

HOW STRANGE THIS FOOD TASTES!

THE NEXT DAY, NEBUCHADNEZZAR EXAMINES ALL THE BOYS WHO HAVE HAD THREE YEARS OF SPECIAL SCHOOLING....AND DANIEL OVERSHADOWS ALL IN EVERY TEST OF LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE...BUT BEFORE THE KING CAN EXPRESS HIS PLEASURE IN DANIEL.....

THIS...THIS FOREIGNER HAS BROKEN YOUR LAW, OH GREAT AND ALMIGHTY KING! HE HAS REFUSED TO EAT YOUR FOOD ALL THESE THREE YEARS!

BUT HE LOOKS EVEN MORE HEALTHY THAN ALL THE OTHERS!

ANYONE CAN LOOK HEALTHY WITH POWDER AND PAINT! MAKE HIM PROVE HIS STRENGTH BY WRESTLING NISROCH BETWEEN THE PITS....WHERE THE LOSER MUST PAY WITH HIS LIFE.

IF ALL THIS IS TRUE, WE SHALL SOON FIND OUT...LET THEM WRESTLE NOW!

WRESTLE?... BUT HOW CAN I...WHEN I FEEL SO WEAK AND DIZZY?!

NOW DANIEL, FEELING A STRANGE DIZZINESS, LOOKS NISROCH OVER CAREFULLY...

BUT WHAT IF HE IS TOO STRONG FOR ME—WHAT WILL I DO?

FOOL! YOU KNOW HE HAS EATEN THE DRUGGED FOOD.... HE WILL BE AS WEAK AS A BABY!

REASSURED THAT DANIEL HAS BEEN WEAKENED BY THE DRUGGED FOOD, NISROCH LEAPS INTO THE FRAY WITH CONFIDENCE....

...TOO MUCH CONFIDENCE—AS HE SOON FINDS OUT!

IN SPITE OF HIS DIZZINESS, DANIEL SEEMS TO FIND A DEEP INNER STRENGTH TO SUSTAIN HIM IN THIS ORDEAL....

BUT THIS IS A BATTLE TO THE DEATH—
WHERE, IN THE WICKED MIND OF NISROCH, ANYTHING IS FAIR....

....STUNNED BY THE BLOW, DANIEL IS HELPLESS AS NISROCH PUSHES!

...WITH THE HOT BREATH OF THE LIONS ON THE BACK OF HIS NECK, DANIEL PRAYS TO GOD FOR HELP....

...THEN, AS IF A MIGHTY HAND WERE AT HIS BACK, DANIEL SNAPS UPWARD AND FORWARD!

THE FORCE OF THIS TUMBLE ROLLS NISROCH BACKWARD...

...BACKWARD... AND OVER!

STAMP ON HIS FINGERS, DANIEL!

KICK HIM IN THE FACE!

BUT DANIEL IS HUMANE...

...AND THE KING IS PLEASED!

IF THIS IS THE RESULT OF LIVING ON VEGETABLES AND WATER, AND NOT EATING MY FOOD, UT-HAMASH—I THINK ALL THE SCHOLARS SHOULD DO IT!

AND SO KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR PROCLAIMS DANIEL THE FIRST SCHOLAR OF THE LAND! DANIEL'S FAITH IN GOD HAS BROUGHT HIM THE REWARD HE SO RICHLY DESERVES! ...THE SAME FAITH THAT WILL HELP AND GUIDE HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE BRILLIANT CAREER THAT LIES BEFORE HIM!

JOHN LEHT!

Tales from the Great Book

THE SAGA OF SAMSON

by John Lehti

MOVING INTO THE PROMISED LAND, SOME ISRAELITES HAVE SETTLED PEACEFULLY IN NORTHERN CANAAN. NOT SO WITH THE TRIBE OF DAN TO THE SOUTH. THE ENEMY PHILISTINES HAVE FORCED THIS TRIBE TO LIVE IN THE HILLS, FEARING THEY WILL OTHERWISE OVERPOWER THEIR TOWNS. FOR IS IT NOT SAID THE ISRAELITE GOD HAS ORDAINED ONE TO DESTROY PHILISTIA? ONE WITH THE STRENGTH OF TEN...ONE NAMED SAMSON!

THE DAY DAWNS WHEN SAMSON, IN LOVE WITH A PHILISTINE MAID, INFORMS HIS FATHER, MANOAH... "NOW THEREFORE GET HER FOR ME TO WIFE..."

NOW THE ARGUMENTS FLY! IS THERE NO ISRAELITE MAID TO PLEASE SAMSON?...DISGRACE THE SONS OF DAN, BEGGING FOR A HEATHEN DAMSEL?

BUT SAMSON IS STRONG OF ARM AND OF WILL...HE WILL NOT BE SWAYED.. MANOAH MUST BUY THE BRIDE OF SAMSON'S CHOICE!

SO MANOAH MAKES READY...AND PROPER GIFTS MUST BE USED IN BUYING A BRIDE! GOLD, CATTLE, WINE, SWEETMEATS, SILVER, OIL...

...ALL THESE ARE TALLIED OFF!

THE CARAVAN LOADED, MANOAH SETS OFF FOR TIMNATH, IN THE LOWLANDS, WHERE, ONCE THE BARTERING FOR THE BRIDE IS COMPLETED, SAMSON WILL JOIN THEM.

AT LAST, SAMSON SETS OUT ON FOOT, FOR HIS MIGHTY LEGS CAN CARRY HIM, FASTER THAN ANY SLOW-FOOTED BEAST OF BURDEN!

APPROACHING TIMNATH, HE GAZES DOWN UPON ITS GREEN VINEYARDS AND GOLDEN FIELDS OF WHEAT, UNAWARE THAT HE IS NOT ALONE....

...UNTIL THE YOUNG LION, GLORYING IN ITS OWN EFFORTLESS POWER, ROARS OUT A CHALLENGE....AND SPRINGS!

LESSER MEN WOULD CRUMPLE UNDER SUCH AN ONSLAUGHT!

BUT WITH NO MORE FEAR THAN A YOUNG LOVER HAS FOR HIS LADY, SAMSON SMILES INTO THESE YELLOW-FLECKED EYES OF FURY!

SUDDENLY, HIS MIGHTY ARMS SHOOT FORWARD TO GRAB THE BEAST!

THEN A MOST BEWILDERED LION FINDS ITSELF WHIRLED ABOUT LIKE A HELPLESS LITTLE KITTEN...

"...WITH AN OUTRAGED ROAR HE FLEXES HIS TAWNY MUSCLES TO BREAK FREE.....

...AND THE NEXT FEW MOMENTS UNFOLD A SCENE OF CARNAGE TOO FEARFUL TO BEHOLD.....

...UNTIL SAMSON ARISES FROM THE LIFELESS FORM OF THE BEAST.....

...AND CONTINUES HIS WAY DOWN TO TIMNATH....

...WHERE CERTAIN PHILISTINES, LEARNING OF HIS PLANS TO WED ONE OF THEIR FAIREST, HOPE TO GIVE HIM MUCH MORE THAN AN INTERESTING RECEPTION!

AS MIGHTY SAMSON ENTERS THE GATE OF HIS FUTURE FATHER-IN-LAW, THERE IS A SHOUT OF RIBALD LAUGHTER....

"IS THIS THE BRIDEGROOM COME BEGGING FOR THE BRIDE," SAYS ONE, WHO IS NOTED FOR HIS WIT, "...OR A TATTERED BEGGAR LOOKING FOR A CRUST OF BREAD?"

ALWAYS A LOVER OF JOKES, SAMSON JOINS IN THE LAUGH... "BE IT A BRIDE OR BREAD--I AM TOLD THAT WHEN MY HAND STRETCHES FORTH, IT ALWAYS RECEIVES SOMETHING..!"

THEN WITH LIGHTNING-LIKE SUDDENNESS, THE "BEGGING" HAND BECOMES A POWERFUL PERSUADER...

...AND SAMSON STRIDES OFF TO THE INNER COURT HAVING HAD HIS JOKE--- AND WITH PROFIT...FOR HIS TATTERS ARE NOW COVERED BY RICH RAIMENT!

"BY THE RIGHT EYE OF DAGON", SAYS ONE, LOOKING AFTER HIM, "I CARE FOR NO MORE JESTING!"

AS SAMSON WATCHES, THE WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS ARE COMPLETED AND THE PASSING OF A SHOE SEALS THE CONTRACT. BY CUSTOM, HE MUST NOW WAIT FOR THIRTY DAYS BEFORE THE MARRIAGE FEAST CAN BEGIN.

RETURNING TO TIMNATH AFTER THIRTY DAYS, CURIOSITY LEADS SAMSON TO THE PLACE OF HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE LION....

...AND HE FINDS THAT BEES HAVE MADE A NEST IN THE CARCASS--AND THE HONEY IS GOOD!

...FOR, EVEN NOW, HE CHUCKLES AS HE FORMS A RIDDLE TO CONFOUND THE YOUNG MEN OF TIMNATH!

HE SHARES THE FIND WITH HIS PARENTS...BUT WILL NOT TELL FROM WHENCE THE HONEY WAS TAKEN...

IN THE MIDST OF THEIR PAGAN ACTIVITIES, THEY SEEK TO RIDICULE THE BRIDEGROOM. "SURELY," SAYS ONE, "HIS STRENGTH IS ALL IN THE ARM, LEAVING NOTHING IN THE HEAD!"

"THIS BEING SO," ANSWERS SAMSON, "YOU WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE SOLVING MY RIDDLE...AND FOR A WAGER!"

"THIS RIDDLE IS IMPOSSIBLE," GRUMBLES A WORRIED PHILISTINE, "WE SHALL SURELY LOSE THE WAGER...AND SAMSON WILL HAVE MADE FOOLS OF US ALL...AND POOR ONES BESIDES!"

AND NOW THE YOUNG MEN ARE HARD PUT TO IT! THE RIDDLE: "OUT OF THE EATER CAME FORTH MEAT, AND OUT OF THE STRONG CAME FORTH SWEETNESS." THE WAGER: EACH MAN TO WIN OR LOSE A NEW GARMENT! THE TIME LIMIT: SEVEN DAYS!

AND SO, THE YOUNG BRIDE IS CORNERED. THEY THREATEN HER, "GET US THE ANSWER, OR WE SHALL SURELY DESTROY YOU, YOUR FATHER AND YOUR HOUSE!"

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN SUCH WAILING AND CRYING IN A BRIDAL BOUDOIR...IT IS OBVIOUS SAMSON DOES NOT LOVE HER, ELSE HE'D NOT HIDE THE ANSWER FROM HER..."BUT EVEN MY PARENTS HAVE I NOT TOLD," SAYS HE, IN DEFENSE....

...BUT HOW LONG CAN ANY DEFENSE STAND BEFORE A YOUNG AND LOVELY BRIDE?.. SAMSON TELLS HER OF THE LION AND THE HONEY...

...ONLY TO HAVE IT RETURN TO HIM VIA THE LIPS OF THE YOUNG MEN...HE HAS LOST A WAGER!

DEPARTING IN FURY TO GET THE GARMENTS FOR HIS "GUESTS" (ALL THIRTY OF THEM), SAMSON KNOWS THAT HIS WIFE BETRAYED THE SECRET AND HE PLANS A SPECIAL REVENGE FOR THE PHILISTINES!

WITH BURNING VENGEANCE IN HIS HEART, SAMSON STALKS FROM THE WEDDING FEAST TO....

....COLLECT GARMENTS FROM ENEMY PHILISTINES WITH WHICH TO PAY THE WAGER TO MEMBERS OF THE VERY SAME TRIBE!

....HE IS TO COLLECT THIRTY GARMENTS IN A FEW SHORT HOURS WITHOUT STIRRING UP THE ENTIRE TOWN!

WHEN THE THIRTIETH GARMENT IS CAPTURED, SAMSON RETURNS TO THE SCENE OF THE WEDDING FEAST!

IF HIS "COLLECTION" OF THE ROBES WAS ROUGH—NO LESS SO, IS HIS DELIVERY OF THE SAME!

Publishers Syndicate

THERE IS A HUGE SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN THIS FIERY BEHEMOTH STORMS OUT OF THE BUILDING—BUT THE SIGH IS TOO SOON, FOR SAMSON THE PRACTICAL JOKER HAS....

...CONJURED ANOTHER LAUGH AT THEIR EXPENSE....THEY EMERGE IN THEIR NEWLY-WON GARMENTS ONLY TO RUN INTO AN IRATE MOB SEARCHING FOR THE STOLEN GARB!

SAMSON IS NOT PRESENT TO ENJOY THIS SCENE. BACK IN THE HILLS, HE BROODS OVER THE BETRAYAL BY HIS WIFE...HOWEVER, THE FIRST STEP IS MADE IN HIS DIVINELY ORDAINED DESTINY.....TO BEGIN THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE PHILISTINES!

Two years passed. Then one night the Pharaoh had two particularly vivid dreams. In his first dream he saw seven fat cows come out of a river to feed in a meadow. Presently, these were followed by seven thin and hungry cows who also rose from the river and stood with the others in the meadow. Then the thin cows ate the fat cows.

In the Pharaoh's second dream he saw seven plump and juicy ears of corn on one stalk. Behind the seven good ears he saw seven bad ears, thin and colorless and dry. And the seven bad ears devoured the seven good ears.

Pharaoh was greatly troubled by his dreams and he sent for all the wise men and magicians of Egypt; but there was none who could interpret them.

While the Pharaoh fretted and fumed the butler remembered the dreams that he and the chief baker had had in prison and how Joseph had interpreted them correctly. So he told his master about it and the Pharaoh sent for Joseph.

Joseph interpreted the dreams immediately. He told the Pharaoh that the seven fat cows and the seven plump ears of corn symbolized seven years of plenty. But the seven lean cows and the seven thin ears of corn signified seven years of famine that were to follow. He advised the Pharaoh to appoint a wise and discreet man who should instruct the people to save one-fifth of all their food to store away during the seven good years so that they would have plenty on hand when the seven years of famine followed.

Then the Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Because God has showed you all this, there is no one so discreet and wise as you."

So the Pharaoh appointed Joseph governor and placed him in charge of the food conservation program and told him to put it into effect immediately. He dressed Joseph in the finest linen and put a gold chain of office around his neck. And thus, the boy who had been a slave became the second most important man in all Egypt.

In the seven plentiful years that followed Joseph commanded everyone to set aside a portion of their harvests and soon the government warehouses were bulging with food.

Then, as Joseph predicted, at the end of the seven good years a great famine spread over the face of the Earth. Everywhere people were starving. But when food gave out in Egypt that Pharaoh sent the people to Joseph and he opened the warehouses and there was plenty for all. Subsequently, all the neighboring countries began to feel the pangs of starvation. Hearing of the food stored up in Egypt, they sent messengers to try to buy some.

Now back in Canaan when Jacob, Joseph's father, heard that there was plenty of food in Egypt, he sent his ten older sons to go there and see if they could buy corn. But he didn't send Benjamin, who was born after Joseph was sold into slavery, because he was afraid for the young boy's safety.

When the brothers arrived in Egypt they were ushered into Joseph's presence. They didn't recognize Joseph because he was now grown and they never dreamed that he could possibly be the governor of Egypt. But Joseph recognized them because they hadn't changed much, since they were grown men at the time they sold him into slavery.

"Why are you here?" Joseph asked.

"We've come here to buy food," they answered.

"You lie!" Joseph scowled. "You are spies who have been sent here to gather information about the famine in our land!"

"No, my lord," they protested. "We are your servants. Our father sent us here to buy food. Only our youngest brother, Benjamin, remained at home."

Joseph was anxious to meet his younger brother whom he had never seen so he continued to insist that they were spies.

"You must prove the truth of what you say," he demanded. "You must bring your younger brother here—and to make sure that you do I will hold one of you as my prisoner!"

So Joseph instructed his soldiers to throw one of the brothers, Simeon, into jail until the others returned with Benjamin.

When the brothers arrived home and told Jacob about Joseph's terms the father was deeply grieved. "I have already lost my son, Joseph," he groaned—"and perhaps, Simeon, too, has perished. Would you force me to lose little Benjamin also?"

But at last Jacob relented and told his sons to return to Egypt with Benjamin.

When the brothers again appeared before Joseph, he said: "You are honorable men. Because you have returned as I commanded I will release your other brother, Simeon."

So Joseph sat his brothers down to a big banquet. Then, at the height of the feast, he revealed to them who he was.

"I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into slavery," he said.

When they heard this the brothers became afraid. But Joseph assured them that he wasn't angry or intent on seeking revenge.

"It was God's will that you should do this to me," he said. "God sent me here to preserve our people. You've already withstood two years of famine and there are still five more years to endure."

Then Joseph asked about his father; and when his brothers told him that he still lived, Joseph ordered them to bring Jacob and their children and grandchildren and herds and flocks to Egypt.

"I will see that you have enough food and live in contentment until the next five years of famine are over," he added.

So Joseph's brothers went home and returned with their father and all their families. And because of Joseph's generous and forgiving nature, they lived happy and prosperous in Egypt for many, many years.

THE END

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